

FOCUS

Beyonce Leads Nominations

For annual NAACP Image Awards

The musical "Dreamgirls" and the TV comedy "Everybody Hates Chris" have each collected a leading eight NAACP Image Award nominations. "Dreamgirls" star Beyonce Knowles led the individual nominees with five nods.

"Dreamgirls" was nominated for best picture and soundtrack, and six members of its ensemble cast — Jamie Foxx, Eddie Murphy, Danny Glover, Jennifer Hudson, Anika Noni Rose and Knowles — earned acting nods.

Other best-picture nominees were "Akeelah and the Bee," "Blood Diamond," "Catch a Fire" and "The Pursuit of Happyness."

The stars of "Akeelah and the Bee" — Keke Palmer, Laurence Fishburne and Angela Bassett — also earned acting nominations, as did Djimon Hounsou of "Blood Diamond" and "Pursuit of Happyness" stars Thandie New-



Jennifer Hudson, Beyonce Knowles and Anika Noni Rose star in 'Dreamgirls.'

ton, Will Smith and his son, Jaden Christopher Syre Smith.

Other big-screen acting nominees were Forest Whitaker ("The Last King of Scotland"), Denzel Washington ("Inside Man"), Harry Belafonte ("Bobby") and Kerry Washington ("The Last King of Scotland").

Besides its best-comedy nomination, "Everybody Hates Chris" earned two directing and five acting nods. Other best-comedy nominees were "All of Us," "The Bernie Mac Show," "Everybody Hates Chris," "Girlfriends" and "Ugly Betty." Best-drama nominations went to "24," "Grey's Anatomy," "Heroes," "The Unit" and "The Wire."

Best-album nominees included "B'Day" by Knowles, Corinne Bailey Rae's self-titled debut, John Legend's "Once Again," Mary J. Blige's "Reflections: A Retrospective" and the "Dreamgirls" soundtrack.

The 38th NAACP Image Awards ceremony will be held March 2 in Los Angeles and broadcast live on Fox.

Inspiring Dance Film in Theaters

Story of life at historically black college

(AP) -- A film about black youth that doesn't focus on violence, gangs and life in the 'hood? Hard to believe these days, but it's possible.

"Stomp the Yard," which opened nationwide Friday, is no cinematic epic. It's a lighthearted dance film — and there's a lot of impressive dancing.

But it's set on the campus of a historically black university where students actually study and have lofty professional goals — and where black Greek organizations and their "stepping" competitions form the center of students' social life.

Amid debate these days about whether black youth should use the n-word as many casually do, "Stomp the Yard" includes minimal profanity. At a time when images of barely dressed women dominate hip-hop videos and its surrounding culture, the most salacious thing in this film is passionate kissing and an actress wearing very short shorts.

Mostly, it's an all-American coming-of-age story of a teenager from a rough background who earns tuition money by working as a campus gardener. His life is transformed when he joins a fraternity.

In a pivotal scene, the lead character, DJ Williams, who is struggling to find his place on campus, is



Columbus Short, a cast member in the film 'Stomp the Yard,' arrives at the premiere of the film in Los Angeles. (AP photo)

shown learning about how black Greek organizations helped educate and nurture some of the nation's heroes, such as civil rights leaders Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr.

"That's probably my favorite

scene in the movie," said Will Packer, the producer, who filmed "Stomp the Yard" mostly at Atlanta's Morris Brown College, founded in 1885 by freed slaves. "I want people who see this film to know the incredible scope and im-

port that these organizations have had."

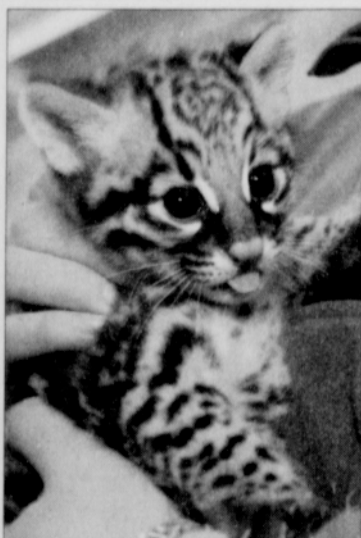
He added that the elaborate stomping and clapping of stepping — or step dancing — must be performed in unison, which builds bonds between fraternity brothers.

In 1988, Spike Lee delved into tensions surrounding economic class and skin color on historically black campuses in "School Daze," which included stepping. And in 2002 "Drumline" focused on black college marching band competitions.

But "Stomp the Yard" touches more on black heritage than either film, which appealed to the lead actor, Columbus Short.

Short has a theater background and spent years on Broadway — he toured with "Stomp," the tap dancing smash hit — and was a choreographer for Britney Spears among other pop stars.

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